Interpersonal Communication: The Self and Perception in Communication

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Abstract

The Self and Perception are key components of the foundation of interpersonal communication. Students new to the communication discipline often have a difficult time understanding these concepts and the value of understanding and practicing them. The following teaching unit is designed to introduce the basics of understanding the Self and Perception in the realm of communication behavior. Included here is a detailed Training Plan and activity for these communication concepts. Additional supplemental documents can be found in the appendices and are noted where applicable. The Power Point slides are captured in Appendix 3.

Interpersonal Communication -

Training Plan/Task Analysis of Communication and the Self and Perception Unit Objective 1: At the end of this session, students should be able to define the concept of Self via the Johari Window.

Objective 2: At the end of this session, students should be able to define the 5 stages of Perception.

Pre-Assessment (Needs) – (5 Minutes) – See Appendix 1.

Lecture Discussion – (20 minutes)

1. Who are you? - Self Concept or Self-Schema (Slide #2)

- a. A self-concept is your image of who you are; your subjective description of who you think you are (DeVito, 2007).
 - i. There are four potential sources that you draw from to determine your self-concept (DeVito, 2007).
 - ii. Looking Glass Self- This was developed by Charles Horton Cooley in 1922. You see yourself as others indicate that they see you (DeVito, 2007). Self-fulfilling prophecy is a similar concept in that we act as others want us to (predictions that come true because, consciously or not, you believed and maybe said they would). This may be a positive (expect you to get good grades, so you do) or negative (expect you to get into trouble all the time, so you do) (DeVito, 2007).
 - iii. Social Comparison- By comparing yourself to your peers, you define who you are, who you want to be and who you don't want to be (DeVito, 2007).
 - iv. Cultural teachings- Your culture provides a basis for who you are by telling you what is acceptable or unacceptable in that culture. You are rewarded for acceptable behavior or punished for unacceptable behavior (DeVito, 2007).
 - 1. Attitudes are learned predispositions to respond favorably or unfavorably to something (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). For example, you like strawberry ice

- cream or your attitude toward strawberry ice cream is positive. This was not an inherent trait.
- 2. Beliefs are the way you structure your reality or what you know (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). These define what is true or false in the world. For example, believe will burn yourself if you touch a hot stove.
- 3. Values are lasting concepts for what is right or wrong and good or bad (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). These are central to who you are. For example, you may value honesty and truth.
- v. Self evaluation is when we react to our own behavior, interpret it, and evaluate it (DeVito, 2007). For example, your conscience makes you feel really guilty about taking a handful of candy from someone's porch on Halloween when the sign says, "Please take one."
- 2. Self Awareness is the extent to which you know yourself. The Johari Window, developed by Joseph Luft in 1984, is a good way for this to be explained (DeVito, 2007). (Slide #3)
 - a. Johari Window is made up of four quadrants.
 - i. Open self- The open self is made up of everything we know about ourselves AND everything everyone else knows about us (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). For example, our name, age, likes/dislikes, etc.

- ii. Blind self- The blind self is composed of all the things others know about you, but that you don't know about yourself. This may be a certain behavior you have that you don't even realize (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). For example, if you have food in your teeth or you always scratch your ear before you cry.
- iii. Hidden self- The hidden self is what you know about yourself but that you keep from others (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). This may be that you really don't like your roommate, but you don't say anything in order to keep the peace.
- iv. Unknown self- The unknown self is what you nor anyone else knows about you (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). You may not yet know if you will like a certain food or what your opinions will be this time next year, for example.
- v. The sizes of the quadrants are likely different sizes depending on the different relationships you have with certain people (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002). For example, a sibling will be different than a new roommate. The windows will change sizes over time; a new boyfriend versus a husband.

Small Group Activity – 15 minutes (Slide #4) – See Appendix 2.

Ask students to match people with their Johari Windows Lecture Discussion (20 minutes)

- b. It is important to increase your self awareness. There are many ways to do this (DeVito, 2007). (Slide #5)
 - i. Ask yourself about yourself. Think about who you are, what your strengths and weaknesses may be, what your goals are, what your likes and dislikes are (DeVito, 2007).
 - ii. Listen to others (DeVito, 2007). When someone says something to you about yourself, pay attention. If someone gives you a compliment, actually think about what it may mean about you.
 - iii. Actively Seek Information about Yourself (DeVito, 2007). As you complete tasks or events, ask for feedback on how you did.
 - iv. See your different selves (DeVito, 2007). Think about the different roles you play in your life. Who are you with your soccer teammates, with your parents, in class, with your friends? Think about how you may be different or the same in each setting.
 - v. Increase your open self (DeVito, 2007). Within reason, try to be more open about who you are, both to yourself and others.
 - vi. Repeat steps frequently (DeVito, 2007). It is important not only to do these thing in this class, but also as you go forward. As you move through the various stages of your life, it is important to keep in contact with yourself. We don't want any mid-life crises.

- c. Self disclosure is communicating information about yourself to another person. There are many influences on how and what to selfdisclose (DeVito, 2007). (Slide #6)
 - i. Who you are- Are you extroverted or introverted? (How outgoing are you?)
 - ii. Your Culture- Different cultures are more open about certain topics (i.e. Americans will disclose information about ourselves and our opinions on politics, for instance, and the Japanese consider this inappropriate) (DeVito, 2007 & Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2002).
 - iii. Your Gender- Generally women disclose more than men (DeVito, 2007).
 - iv. Your Listeners (DeVito, 2007) Is it a friend, coworker, in a group or one-on-one?
 - v. Topic and channel If you are talking online (generally more revealing), in person or on the phone or about your favorite class versus past relationships disclosure will differ (DeVito, 2007).
 - vi. Self-disclosure is good (it helps you be self aware, can contribute to the success of communication and relationships, and it my be good for you psychologically), but there are personal, relational and professional risks (DeVito, 2007).
 - vii. Effectiveness is key. Some guidelines to consider are:(Slide #7)

- 1. Your motivation- is it to help a relationship or person or is it meant to be hurtful? (DeVito, 2007)
- 2. The Appropriateness- Think about the time, place, relationship and context of the conversation that includes disclosure. (DeVito, 2007)
- 3. The Other Person- Are they also disclosing? (DeVito, 2007) If so, you are likely on the right path, if not, you may reconsider.
- 4. Consequences/Burden (DeVito, 2007)- Is the information you are disclosing going to be too much for the listener to handle?
- 5. If someone discloses to you, don't hold the information against him/her or use him/her to cause harm (DeVito, 2007). Keep their confidence and be supportive of them.
- 6. It is ok to not self-disclose if you feel uncomfortable. Be assertive in your decision (DeVito, 2007).
- 7. Be willing to reciprocate if someone discloses information to you (DeVito, 2007).
- 8. Be an active and effective listener (DeVito, 2007).
- d. Self-esteem is the value you have of yourself. It is the total of all of the positive and negative evaluations you may have of your self and may be called self-worth. Self-awareness and self-esteem are closely related – As you become more self-aware the evaluations of yourself

may also change. It is important to do what you can to ensure these evaluations remain positive (DeVito, 2007). (Slide #8)

- i. Research has found that people with higher self-esteem are generally happier (DeVito, 2007). Increase your self-esteem by:
 - 1. Reducing self-destructiveness. No one is perfect, everyone has weakness and strengths, it isn't possible to please everyone. Sometimes it is best to take your time as you need it to be and you don't always need to do more than anyone else (DeVito, 2007).
 - 2. Remind yourself how great you are. It is important for you to be proud of yourself and happy with whom you are. Affirm yourself whenever you feel the need or desire. Also, it's ok to look to others for affirmation. When you need reassurance that you did a good job, ask (DeVito, 2007).
 - 3. Seek out nourishing people. There are some people who are negative and others who are positive influences in your life. The negative, or noxious, people should be reduced. They are more likely to sabotage your efforts to be a better person or to influence you in undesirable ways. Positive, or nourishing people will help to make

- you a better person and will acknowledge your value.

 These people should be sought after (DeVito, 2007).
- 4. Work on projects that will lead to success. Don't set yourself up for failure. You are bound to encounter many challenges, and some failure, in school, work and life. Look to these as growth opportunities that make you stronger and do what you can to learn from these experiences so that you will be successful the next time around (DeVito, 2007).
- 5. Remind yourself of your successes. Think about them when you need them and take the emotional reassurance they may also provide (DeVito, 2007).
- 3. Perception Now that we know how we get to know ourselves, it is also important to know how we become aware of our surroundings. Our five senses (hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, smelling) help us to perceive the different people, places, objects and events that are present in our lives. This active process occurs in 5 stages (DeVito, 2007). (Slide #9)
 - a. Stage 1- Stimulation (Slide #10)- Your senses are stimulated all the time by everything around you (DeVito, 2007). Because we can't take in and process everything, we engage in selective perception via:
 - i. Selective attention- We attend to stimulation we are interested
 in (i.e. sports statistics), that fills a need (i.e. stoplights and

- other cars while driving) or meets our expectations (i.e. if you expect to see something, you may not see it) (DeVito, 2007).
- ii. Selective exposure- We intentionally expose ourselves to things that will confirm our existing beliefs, contribute to our personal objectives and goals, or that is satisfying. You pay attention to what you already know and less to what you disagree with (DeVito, 2007).
- b. Stage 2 Organization (Slide #11) Because we have so much information to process, we use 3 methods to keep it organized.
 - i. Organization by Rules- Proximity (if things are close to each other, they go together, for example, two people walking side by side down the street), similarity/contrast (people who look alike are related) and good form (even if a piece of something is missing, you treat it as a whole) (DeVito, 2007).
 - ii. Organization by Schemata- These are mental templates used to classify information. Can be based on your experiences, the media or hearsay. Stereotypes are an example of this kind of schema (the formation of an oversimplified opinion or uncritical judgment of others) (DeVito, 2007).
 - iii. Organization by Scripts- These are similar to schemata except they focus more on events and sequences and how things should unfold or play out (i.e. football game) (DeVito, 2007).

- c. Stage 3- Interpretation/Evaluation- The process of explaining what has been selected and organized. These two things are inseparable. As soon as you perceive something or someone, you make a positive or negative judgment about them. Entirely subjective and based on your own experiences, needs, wants, values beliefs, expectations, physical and emotional states, etc (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2002 & DeVito, 2007). (For example, you meet someone and instantly don't like them or feel comfortable with them.)
- d. Stage 4- Memory (Slide #12)- Evaluations are filed away in our memory with cognitive tags for later retrieval. The schemas we have act as filters/gatekeepers that allow, prevent or distort the storage of the memories. As mentioned, these are affected by our rules, schemata scripts (and gender) (DeVito, 2007). (Think of folders within the drawers of a filing cabinet.)
- e. Stage 5- Recall (Slide #13) Memory is not reproductive, it is reconstructive. Based on your schema and scripts, you take the tagged elements to recreate what happened previously (DeVito, 2007).
 - It is possible that there are inaccuracies. You may recall elements that are in line with your schema and fail to recall contradictory information (DeVito, 2007).

Group Activity (10 minutes) (Slide #14)

Ask students to explain their perceptions of what they see.

Assessment/Feedback (5 minutes) – See Appendix 1.

References

Beebe, S. A., Beebe, S. J. & Redmond, M.V. (2002). *Interpersonal communication:**Relating to others. (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

This book is an interpersonal communication textbook and covers the basic foundations of the field of interpersonal communication. The material is presented in a manner suitable for an introductory course on the material. This reference will provide a valuable source on the definition of the self within communication and the aspects of self to consider in this area.

DeVito, J. A. (2007). *The interpersonal communication book.* (11th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

This book is provides an introductory look at interpersonal communication. This textbook is the previous edition of that used as the basis for the course being taught on this subject at Park. This combined with the current edition will illustrate the changes in the presentation of the material. This will allow alternatives to presenting the material that students will have encountered in their pre-class reading.

DeVito, J. A. (2009). *The Interpersonal Communication Book*, 12th edition, Allyn & Bacon: Boston.

This book is provides an introductory look at interpersonal communication.

This textbook is the current edition of that used as the basis for the course being taught on this subject at Park. As a result, this is an essential reference.

This will provide the basis for the outline of the material to be used and will be useful in understanding the material student will be expected to have read in preparation for the class.

Littlejohn, S.W. & Foss, K.A. (2008). *Theories of human communication.* (9th ed.).

Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth.

This textbook serves as a more advanced reference for communication and the self. The book covers an array of subjects within the communication field and does provide additional information on interpersonal communication.

While the material may not be at a level suitable for presentation at this particular time, it does provide a more in-depth resource on communication.

Mader, T. F. & Mader, D. C. (1993) *Understanding one another: Communicating interpersonally.* (2nd ed.). Madison, Wisconsin; Brown & Benchmark Publishers.

This book is an older edition textbook on interpersonal communication. This books serves as an alternative to presenting introductory material on interpersonal communication. Additional information on the theories to be presented to the class is also available. This text is useful in that it provides additional information on the topics to be taught.

Stuckey, J. (2009). *Instructor's manual and test bank for DeVito the interpersonal communication book.* (12th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

This resource will provide a solid reference for the structure of the material as it is presented in *The Interpersonal Communication Book*. Though it will be necessary to supplement this outline, the foundation is provided in the manner it is presented in the textbook for the course to be taught. Also, supplemental activities and resources are provided that can be used to enhance the text book's material.

Verderber, R. F. & Verderber, K. S. (1995). *Inter-act: Using interpersonal*communication skills. (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

This book provides an additional sources for the fundamental principles and theories of interpersonal communication. The approach used by this text is centered on the ability to apply the information, and so provides additional insight in this area. This text is useful in that it provides additional information on the topics to be taught.

Appendix 1

Needs Assessment

In order to gauge student expectations for the information in the unit and the level of necessary instruction, pose the following questions to the class. "We will be discussing the formation of self-concepts, roles and perceptions. There is a lot of information that could relate to these topics, so...

- 1. What would you like to understand in these areas?
- 2. As we begin, do you have any specific questions you would like me to answer regarding these topics?"

Communication Assessment

"So, a couple of the important things that I hope you will be taking away from today are the concepts of the Self and of Perception. Within the theories of the Self, the Johari Window is an important tool to understand self-awareness. Name the four selves and what they mean. (Ask different members of the class to each provide one of the 4.) Also, when working to understand Perception, it is important know that there are 5 stages within the process. Name the 5 stages and what they mean. (Ask different members of the class to each provide 1 of the 5.)"

Appendix 2

The Johari Window (Handout)

The Johari Window is a model that helps explain the different levels of Self Awareness. It is made up of four quadrants, each representing a 'self' that contribute to our level of self awareness.

Open self- The open self is made up of everything we know about ourselves AND everyone else knows about us. For example, our name, age, likes/dislikes, etc.

Blind self- The blind self is composed of all the things others know about you, but that you don't know about yourself. This may be a certain behavior you have that you don't even realize. For example, if you have food in your teeth or you always scratch your ear before you cry.

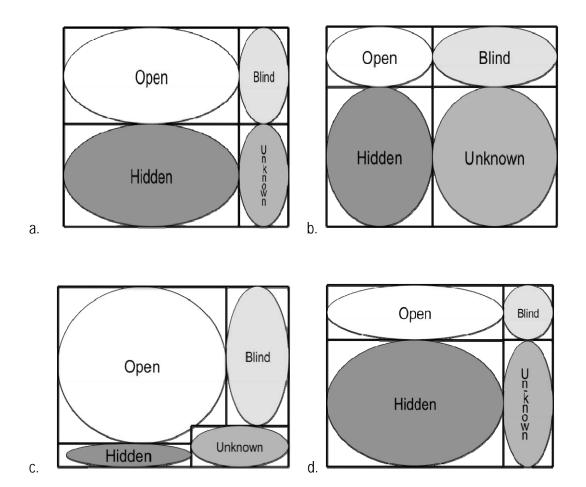
Hidden self- The hidden self is what you know about yourself but that you keep from others. For example, you really don't like your roommate, but you don't say anything in order to keep the peace.

Unknown self- The unknown self is what you nor anyone else knows about you. You may not yet know if you will like a certain food or what your opinions will be this time next year, for example.

The sizes of the quadrants are likely different sizes depending on the different relationships you have with certain people. For example, a sibling will be different than a new roommate. The windows will change sizes over time; a new boyfriend versus a husband.

Below are four descriptions of people and a relationship that exists in his/her life. Match each of the below descriptions to one of the Johari Window diagrams on the next page.

- 1. Richard is 16 and bean attending a new school this year for 10th grade. He has been in school for about 6 weeks and wants to ask a girl in his biology class to go with him to the Homecoming dance.
- 2. Martha loves to read books on self discovery and has taken every personality test she has come across in her 35 years. In order to meet new people, Martha has been volunteering at the local animal shelter. After about two weeks of volunteering, the other women suggest she join them for their monthly girl's night out.
- Jessica and Diana have been friends for about 3 years. They are both married and have kids, so they don't get to go out together as often as they would like. Still, they see each other regularly and each would call the other a pretty good friend.
- 4. Joe and Monica dated for over a year before they got engaged. Their wedding is only a couple of months away and both of them are anxiously awaiting the big day.



Beebe, S. A., Beebe, S. J. & Redmond, M.V. (2002). *Interpersonal communication:**Relating to others. (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Appendix 3

